

I Feel Worthy Because of My Child: The Interaction of Child-based Worth and Parenting Stress in Predicting Parenting Practices

YAU Tin Yuet, Josie, co-supervised by Prof. Qian Wang & Prof. Florrie Ng



Introduction

Child-based Worth (CBW)

- CBW refers to the degree to which parents base **their worth** on the **performance of their children** (Grolnick et al., 2007).
- Recent research shows that there are **two subconstructs** of CBW: **Success-oriented** and **failure-oriented** (Li & Ng, 2025).
- Yet, previous work mainly investigated the effect of overall CBW on parenting (e.g., Ng et al., 2014).

Autonomy Support (AS) and Psychological Control (PC)

- AS entails the **recognition of children’s needs, thoughts, and feelings**, even when they differ from those of their parents, along with **respect and support** towards those needs (Grolnick et al., 1997); high levels may **produce positive outcomes** in children (e.g., better self-regulation and self-initiation abilities) (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; Vasquez et al., 2016).
- PC is an **insidious type of control** that involves practices that **manipulate the emotional and cognitive experiences** of children (Fang et al., 2022); high levels may **negatively affect children’s development** of self-identity, autonomy, and self-other boundaries (Barber & Xia, 2013; Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2010).
- AS and PC are **not mutually exclusive** (Silk et al., 2003).

Parenting Stress

- Stress may cause parents to be less sensitive to their children’s needs and generally less responsive to their children (Cheah et al., 2009).
- Parents with high parenting stress tend to be more authoritarian, harsh, and punitive (Haskett et al., 2004; Rodgers, 1998; Xu et al., 2005), all related to their use of control.
- Stress may **activate certain pre-existing characteristics** in individuals, and affects their behaviours (Grolnick et al., 2002).
- Does parenting stress (situational) interact with CBW (stable trait)?

Overview

- This was one of the first few studies that **disaggregated CBW** and evaluated whether the two subconstructs **predicted** maternal levels of AS and PC.
- Explored whether the relationships between success-oriented CBW and the two parenting practices **differ** from the relationships between failure-oriented CBW and the two parenting practices based on the positive-negative asymmetry effect (Baumeister et al., 2001).
- Examined if parenting stress **moderates** the four relationships mentioned in point 1.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

- Higher levels of success-oriented CBW would predict decreased levels of AS;
- Higher levels of success-oriented CBW would predict increased levels of PC;
- Higher levels of failure-oriented CBW would predict decreased levels of AS;
- Higher levels of failure-oriented CBW would predict increased levels of PC.


Hypothesis 2

- High levels of parenting stress would moderate the association between success-oriented CBW and AS, but not at average and low levels;
- High levels of parenting stress would moderate the association between success-oriented CBW and PC, but not at average and low levels;
- High levels of parenting stress would moderate the association between failure-oriented CBW and AS, but not at average and low levels;
- High levels of parenting stress would moderate the association between failure-oriented CBW and PC, but not at average and low levels.

Methods

Participants: **163 mothers** (*Age* = 42.99 years) **and their children** (*Age* = 10.26 years; 50.3% boys) from Primary 4 (*n* = 65), Primary 5 (*n* = 63), and Primary 6 (*n* = 35).

Measures:

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 - Parental Child-based Worth Scale (Ng et al., 2014).
 - Parenting Stress Index (Luo et al., 2021; Yeh et al., 2001).
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 - Parents’ Autonomy Support and Psychological Control (Wang et al., 2007).

*The data set was extracted from the project iGen in the Child and Family Research Laboratory.

Results

- H1:** There was **no significant main effect of both success-oriented and failure-oriented CBW** on predicting maternal AS and PC.
- H2:** **Parenting stress did not moderate** the four relationships **but predicted AS and PC**.
- H3:** Both subconstructs of CBW showed insignificant relationships with AS and PC, making it unable to compare the strength of their associations with the two parenting practices. However, the **CFA results corroborated the existence of the two factors of CBW**, and **only failure-oriented CBW was significantly correlated with parenting stress**, demonstrating that they are interrelated yet independent factors.

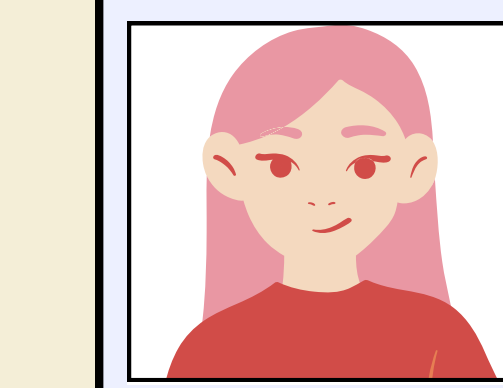
Central Analyses – Success-oriented Child-based Worth						
Predictor	Predicting Behaviors					
	Autonomy Support			Psychological Control		
	B	SE	β	B	SE	β
Main Effect						
Success-oriented Child-based Worth	.002	.058	.002	.028	.049	.030
Parenting Stress	-.329***	.097	-.212***	.192*	.082	.124*
Interaction						
Success-oriented Child-based Worth x Parenting Stress	-.087	.087	-.060	.002	.073	.001
* <i>p</i> < .05; ** <i>p</i> < .01; *** <i>p</i> < .001.						

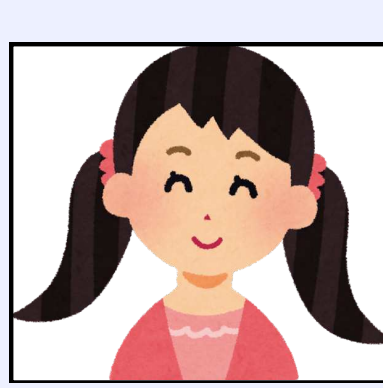
Central Analyses – Failure-oriented Child-based Worth						
Predictor	Predicting Behaviors					
	Autonomy Support			Psychological Control		
	B	SE	β	B	SE	β
Main effect						
Failure-oriented Child-based Worth	.046	.052	.058	.023	.044	.029
Parenting Stress	-.344***	.102	-.221***	.181*	.086	.117*
Interaction						
Failure-oriented Child-based Worth x Parenting Stress	-.014	.063	-.012	.001	.053	.001
* <i>p</i> < .05; ** <i>p</i> < .01; *** <i>p</i> < .001.						

Discussion

Insignificant Associations between the Two Subconstructs of CBW and AS & PC

- Potential **discrepancies between mothers’ actual parenting practices and children’s perceptions**.
 - Children’s reports on mothers’ AS and PC are largely based on their own perceptions of those behaviors rather than the actual behaviors performed by mothers; children may not share the same understandings of the intentions behind the behaviors.
 - Parent-child agreement on parental behaviors is relatively low (Schwarz et al., 1985).
 - Children report parental behaviors more accurately when it is overt and objective (Taber, 2010), but AS and PC are quite subjective.
- Compared to previous studies that employed the same AS/PC scales, **child participants in the current study are relatively young**.
 - Previous work: adolescent VS current work: preadolescents.
 - Older children provide more accurate reports (Taber, 2010).
 - Children’s conceptions of parental control change with age (Pomerantz & Eaton, 2000).

Adolescents	
	Increased demand for autonomy and independence (Sessa & Steinberg, 1991); this heightens their sensitivity to parents’ actions that tap these demands (AS/PC).

Preadolescents	
	Still in a stage where they view parenting behaviors in a positive light without recognizing behaviors that may encourage or limit their autonomy.

- CBW may be unrelated to AS & PC (very unlikely as contradicts most previous work).
 - Parenting behaviours are also influenced by the characteristics of children.
 - Perceived child competence** (the extent to which parents believe their children are competent) may interact with CBW.
 - When mothers perceive their children as competent, they may feel that their self-worth is less threatened, which leads to more AS and less PC.

Insignificant Moderation Effect

- Sample size (n = 163) is relatively small** for detecting a moderation effect.
 - Previous research on parenting practices suggested a small interaction effect size (*f*² = .02) (e.g., Van Leeuwen et al., 2004).
 - Post hoc* power analysis suggested a sample for 485 for detection of a small moderation effect in the current study; this study may have had insufficient power to detect the hypothesised moderating effect of parenting stress.

Significant Associations between Parenting Stress and AS & PC

- Parenting stress **lowers mothers’ psychological flexibility**.
 - It is an emotional regulatory skill that affects parents’ capacity to accept parenting-related negative thoughts and emotions without judgment (Brassell et al., 2016).
 - Stress compels parents to alleviate overwhelming feelings, which encourages them to seek shortcuts to achieve desired outcomes (child’s compliance), leading to PC.

Confirmation of the Two Independent yet Correlated Factors in CBW

- Only failure-oriented CBW was significantly correlated with parenting stress.
 - Positive-negative asymmetry effect** (Baumeister et al., 2001), which entails that adverse events are more salient.

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Attn: Mothers

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